

THE DAUGHTER OF HEAVEN

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The Daughter of Heaven by Pierre Loti & Judith Gautier

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PIERRE LOTI & JUDITH GAUTIER

**THE DAUGHTER
OF HEAVEN**

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BY
PIERRE LOTI AND JUDITH GAUTIER

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Preface

Thoroughly to understand China, one must realize that it has for three hundred years cherished in its heart a deep and continually bleeding wound. When the country was conquered by the Manchus of Tartary, the ancient dynasty of the Mings was forced to yield the throne to the Tzin invaders, but the Chinese nation never ceased to mourn the ancient dynasty nor to hope for its restoration. Revolution is therefore a permanent thing in China—a fire which smoulders eternally, breaking into flame in one province only to be smothered and blaze out again presently in another.

No doubt the Yellow Empire is too immense to permit of complete understanding among the revolutionaries, or of collective effort to break off the Tartan yoke. Several times, nevertheless, the Chinese race has been near to victory. When, some twenty years ago, certain events, which Europe never really understood, brought about an upheaval in China, the revolutionaries, victorious for a time, proclaimed at Nanking an emperor of Chinese blood and of the dynasty of the Mings. His name was Ron-Tsin-Tse, which means: The Final Flowering, and by the faithful his era was called Tai-Ping-Tien-Ko, which is as much as to say: The Empire of the Great Celestial Peace. He reigned seventeen years, concurrently with the Tartar Emperor at Peking and almost within the shadow of that city.

Later, the authorities forced a complete suppression of his history: all records of it were confiscated and burned, and men were forbidden, under penalty of death, even to utter his name. Here, however, is the

translation of a passage relating to him which occurs in a voluminous report addressed by the Tartar general Tsen-Konan-Wei, to the Emperor at Peking:

"When the revolutionaries rose in the province of Chan-Tung, (he says) they possessed themselves of sixteen provinces and six hundred cities. Their guilty chief and his criminal friends had become really formidable. All their generals fortified themselves in the places they had taken, and not until they had stood three years of siege were we again Masters in Nang-King. At this time the rebel army numbered more than two hundred thousand men, but not one of them would surrender. The moment they perceived themselves lost they set fire to the palace and burned themselves alive. Many of the women hanged or strangled themselves, or threw themselves into the lakes in the gardens. However, I succeeded in making one young woman prisoner, and pressed her to tell me where the Emperor was. 'He is dead,' she replied; 'vanquished, he poisoned himself.' But immediately the new Emperor was proclaimed in the person of his son, Hon-Fo-Tsen. She led me to the old Emperor's tomb, which I ordered broken open. In it was found in fact the Emperor's body, enveloped in a shroud of yellow silk embroidered with dragons. He was old, bald, and had a white mustache. I caused his body to be burned and his ashes to be thrown to the winds. Our soldiers destroyed all that remained within the walls: there were three days and nights of killing and pillage. However, one troop of several thousands of rebels, very well-armed, succeeded in escaping from the city, dressed in the costumes of our dead, and it is to be feared that the new Emperor was able to escape with them."

This Emperor, Hon-Fo-Tsen, who, in fact, did succeed in fleeing from Nang-King, was looked upon by

the real Chinese as their legitimate sovereign, and his descendants in secret no doubt reigned after him uninterruptedly.

Several years ago a very remarkable man, who seemed to incarnate in himself the new China, dreamed of a pacific and genuine reconciliation of the two inimical races. (He had many dreams indeed: one of them, for instance, that of founding the United States of the World.) He conceived the almost unrealizable project of converting to his ideas the Emperor at Peking himself and of securing his help to reform China without the spilling of any blood. His name was Kan-You-Wey. To get near the Emperor he opened a school at Peking in 1889.

Many rumors, though very conflicting ones, were in circulation concerning the personality of this invisible Emperor Kwang-Su, kept as he was under strict guardianship, like a captive in the heart of his palace and so unknown to everyone. Some versions declared him alert, well-read, interested in modern things; others represented him as feeble in body and spirit, given to excesses and incapable of action.

Kan-You-Wey would believe only in the favorable version: he knew besides what the ministers of the Dowager Regent were worth, masters with her of the Imperial power. He pitied the Imperial victim. His whole heart turned toward his sovereign because he was unhappy. How could he reach him in his quadrupled walls? How win the attention of his melancholy idol? Kan-You-Wey ten times renewed his attempts, with the zeal of an apostle, and succeeded finally, in 1898, thanks to one of his disciples, in putting before the Emperor a memorial that he had prepared for him.

Then the phantom-sovereign roused himself. Much struck with these insurgent ideas, he wanted them explained to him in detail, and gave an audience to the reformer. He surrendered at once to the influence of this great spirit, made him his minister, intimate and confidant; and, sustained by his counsel, achieved at last the control of his affairs.

It is at this moment of the reign of Kwang-Su that our play takes place. The Emperor himself is the hero, and Kan-You-Wey figures in it under the name of Fount-in-the-Forest.

JUDITH GAUTIER AND PIERRE LOTI.

- Act I—First Tableau.
The Gardens of the Palace at Nang-King.
Second Tableau.
The Throne Room of the Palace at Nang-King.
- Act II—The Pavilion of the Empress.
- Act III—Interior of the Imperial Citadel at Nang-King.
- Act IV—First Tableau.
The Place of Execution at the Base of the Ramparts, Peking.
Second Tableau
The Grand Throne Room in the Palace at Peking.